

**Testimony of William Tuthill in SUPPORT of SB 280**

March 14, 2012

Good Afternoon Senator Coleman, Representative Fox and other distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is William Tuthill. I live in Madison and I am a former Assistant Deputy Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Correction where I was responsible for the central and northern region correctional facilities in Connecticut. I was the Warden of both New Haven and Bridgeport Correctional Centers and worked at five correctional facilities during my 22 ½ years of service.

I support SB 280, which would repeal Connecticut's death penalty. The death penalty in Connecticut and across the country is broken beyond repair. It is time to end the death penalty in Connecticut.

The death penalty does not deter crime. The murder rate in death penalty states has exceeded the rate in non-death penalty states in the last two decades - in some cases by as much as 44%.

I want to focus our attention on one death penalty issue: concern over the conditions of incarceration for those eligible for the death penalty, but instead sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of release.

Life Without Release has been under fire as insufficient punishment.

"A Country Club", "A Walk in the Park" and "Three Hots and a Cot" are terms flippantly used to describe prison life. That is NOT reality.

It is widely accepted that severe restrictions and isolation increase mental illness and violence.

An article in the New York Times on March 10, 2012 cited the experience of Mississippi where the lessening of severe restrictions on segregated inmates actually significantly improved safety for staff and inmates.

Commissioner Arnone testified before your Committee on March 21, 2011 requesting that you not restrict the discretion of the Department of Correction in inmate management options.

We have a legal and ethical obligation to keep all our correctional facilities safe for both staff and inmates. Keeping inmates occupied is one of the best tools toward reaching this end – even for murderers.

Life in prison is an incredibly severe sentence. Imagine that your world was controlled in every aspect. Personally experience the deprivation that is inherent in incarceration for just one day. I am confident that your view of incarceration would be greatly impacted.

Connecticut must end state sponsored murder and recognize that the death penalty is fundamentally wrong and it is irreversible.

We allow the acts of a few depraved individuals to exert undue influence on our public policy.

Now is the time to end a critically flawed policy which represents our most primitive instincts of retribution and revenge.

I hope and pray that you do the right thing and repeal the death penalty NOW.

Thank you.

